

DRAFT
TOWN OF DARIEN
COMMISSION ON AGING
SPECIAL MEETING
FEBRUARY 24, 2010

ATTENDANCE: Joseph Pankowski, Chair; Charlie England, Mary McCarthy, Pat Morgan, Amy Squyres, Tom Valentino

ABSENT: Jennifer Geddes, Ron Heinbaugh, Robin Woods

OTHERS: Beth Paris (Senior Center Coordinator), Olive Hauser (ex-officio/Social Services Director), Karl Kilduff, Administrative Officer; David Campbell, First Selectman; Sue Swiatek, Director of Parks and Recreation

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Pankowski called the Special Meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

Mr. Pankowski welcomed everyone. He said that due to a lack of a quorum, the January Minutes will be reviewed in March and that there will be no vote at this meeting.

Mr. Valentino asked if today's Minutes will be available before the Board of Selectmen's Meeting Monday evening at 7:45 p.m. Mr. Pankowski said that he and the secretary would try to do so and that the Minutes would be put on the Town website.

Ms. Squyres, a member of the Senior Center Task Force, gave her report. She said the Task Force toured the locations. The current Senior Center location will be eliminated as a choice. The two options are 35 Leroy Avenue (old Library), and BOE space at Town Hall.

Option 1: Move the BOE to 35 Leroy Avenue and move the Senior Center to existing BOE space at Town Hall.

Option 2: Senior Center to move to 35 Leroy Avenue and the BOE to remain at its current location.

She said David Genovese, a local contractor and developer, is involved with the project. Cost and timing have not yet been fully defined, she added. The double move will require more time. Jayme Stevenson will give a report Monday at the BOS meeting. A matrix has been developed with weighted categories. Former studies also will be considered as to what transpired in earlier years.

Mr. Campbell joined the meeting at 9:15 a.m.

Mr. Campbell said that we have moved from Phase I, in that a determination has been made that the current Senior Center location does not work.

Phase II - Move to BOE space or the old Library space.

Mr. Pankowski said that the BOE space here at Town Hall will allow for a gym whereas at the Library there will not be a gym. The Social Services Department at Town Hall also will benefit seniors.

Ms. Squyres said that the space at the old Library is more than adequate and that rooms could convert to multi-purpose uses rather than single use. At Town Hall there is the Arts Council, evening availability, and a lunchroom which are plusses. She mentioned that seniors are 55 years of age and up. Social Services may not be as important to someone who is 55.

Mr. Campbell said that the new Senior Center will be more of a Community Center at Town Hall. There is much unused space downstairs and that space should be put to use. Seniors will be more involved if the Center is at Town Hall rather than at a stand-alone building. Long term, Town Hall is a better fit, he said.

Mr. Kilduff joined the meeting at 9:30 a.m.

Mr. Campbell and Ms. Squyres said that the current Senior Center building will be razed and no operations costs will be incurred.

Mr. England said he is a senior warden at St. Luke's. He said St. Luke's is considering building a Youth and Community Center, and wondered if the Senior Center could be housed there. He said funds have been raised, but not yet gathered. Parking also is good, he said. Mr. Pankowski asked if hot meals would be available, Mr. England said no.

Mr. Kilduff said that housing the Senior Center here at Town Hall offers a wide range of benefits. Town Hall would have a full kitchen. The program is growing, he added. If St. Luke's is used, the Town will need a contractual relationship and RTM approval.

Ms. Paris added that other organizations assist seniors with information and programs such as 'Aging in Place' the "YMCA", Library, etc. The new Senior Center does not have to do it all. It is a way of giving back to the people who have lived here all their lives. Mr. Campbell said collaboration builds the community. It will bring in more people.

Ms. McCarthy asked if the Task Force is leaning one way or the other. Ms. Squyres said the double move is preferred. The Task Force has completed their work, she added. Ms. McCarthy asked about the time frame. Mr. Campbell said there is no definitive answer at this time but it would take a couple of years.

Ms. Hauser joined the meeting at 9:45 a.m.

Mr. Campbell said that there are other projects being considered such as the Police Station project and Weed Beach that have been approved by the RTM and Board of Selectmen. Mr.

Campbell said the old Library site must be bonded by September and there has to be a use for the site to be bonded. Bonding rates are low right now.

Ms. McCarthy asked if the BOE pays rent to the town. Mr. Campbell said no.

SENIOR CENTER REPORT

Ms. Paris gave her report. She said that the phones are installed and fully operational. The new number is (203) 656-7455 and two additional lines are in place for roll-over calls. Office phones have separate lines with voice mail capability.

February Highlights:

- Social Service Chats NEW every Thursday from 10 a.m. to 12 noon with Mary Bernat, a case manager. Topics range from heating assistance, transportation, taxes, shopping, etc.
- Tuesdays - Stretching NEW with Frances Goulart
- Monthly Caregiver Educational Support Group meets every third Tuesday of every month from 1:00 – 2:30.
- February 3- Blood pressure screening
- February 4 - Intermediate French NEW
- February 8 - Everything You Wanted to Know about Your Jewelry with Joe Brandt
- February 22 - Zumba Gold NEW – every Monday following this day

Works in Progress:

- Membership – new and renewals
- Program planning
- Organizing information for a new policy manual
- Page set up on the Town website under Parks and Recreation
- Pamphlet development
- Developing an e-mails master list

Attended ‘Aging in Place’ Advisory Board meeting
SWCAA meeting cancelled due to weather.

SOCIAL SERVICES REPORT

Ms. Hauser gave her report. She said that the heating assistance program is ending March 15.

Seniors are still having problems selling their homes.

Some seniors are getting part-time census jobs, she reported.

SNAP – a new food program, is available without an asset level requirement.

Gallivant meeting at the Red Cross on Friday.

The Aging in Place strategic plan is near completion.

ARC volunteers to help seniors with shopping.

Mr. Pankowski reminded all about Monday’s BOS meeting at 7:45 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:07 a.m.

Next scheduled meeting is Wednesday, March 17, at 9:00 a.m., Room 119 at Darien Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Hohlweck,
Recording Secretary